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ABSTRACT

Media coverage of terrorist attacks plays an important role in shaping the public understanding of terrorism. While there have been studies analyzing coverage of incidents prior to 9/11, there has been little research examining post-9/11 coverage. This study fills this gap by examining coverage in the USA between the dates of 12 September, 2001 and 31 December 2015, using a list of terrorist-related incidents to find relevant *New York Times* articles. This study identifies the variables influencing whether an incident is covered and how much coverage it receives. The results follow a similar pattern to pre-9/11 *Times* coverage, where most terrorist incidents receive no coverage while a few are sensationalized. Incidents with casualties, Jihadi perpetrators, governmental targets, or firearms are significantly more likely to be covered and receive more news space. Additionally, content analysis suggests that these articles tends to portray Jihadi incidents as international regardless of perpetrator origin.

Introduction

This study examines the extent to which the media framing of terrorism in the *New York Times* is an accurate reflection of terrorism in the USA. In contrast to other forms of crime, a terrorist attack that is ignored by the media is often an abject failure. Although such acts cause great harm to their primary victims in and of themselves, the intent is usually to convey a message to a larger group, with the primary victims serving as symbolic representatives. Thus, the media's response to a terrorist act plays an integral role by reporting on the attack in more detail than would otherwise be available to anyone without a direct experience of it. Unfortunately, coverage of this sort can have a harmful emotional impact on media consumers (Keinan, Sadeh, & Rosen, 2003; Shoshani & Slone, 2008; Slone, 2000; Wicks, 2006). In light of this, the media's framing of terrorist attacks has been criticized for its role in adding to the fear and confusion that the attacks were designed to spread (Bassiouni, 1981; Schmid, 1989). A further concern is the possibility that media coverage skews the perception of terrorist attacks in a manner that magnifies their impact.

If the news paints an accurate picture of the full spectrum of attacks, then their culpability is limited: while it could be argued that they assist the spread of anxiety by providing unnecessary detail to the general public, the attacks themselves would still be the ultimate source of such feelings. However, if the media's framing of terrorism emphasizes atypical cases, false perceptions of terrorism could lead to additional stress. For instance, if news coverage focuses primarily on attacks with larger body counts, the public would have an inaccurate perception of the lethality of terrorist incidents, leading to greater perceptions of danger.

Terrorists and extremists from a variety of ideological belief systems have committed hundreds of fatal and other violent attacks in the United States over the last 25 plus years (Fitzpatrick, Gruenewald, Smith, & Roberts, 2017; Freilich, Chermak, Belli, Gruenewald, & Parkin, 2014; LaFree & Bersani, 2014). The impact of misleading coverage of these events can be far reaching. Mass panic fueled by sensationalist journalism can have a profound impact on public policy. For example, much of the criminal justice policy of the 1990s was motivated by a fear of "superpredators", supposed juvenile sociopaths described in an alarmist article in the *Weekly Standard* (DiLulio, 1995). Despite being in the middle of a steep decline in crime rates, politicians passed increasingly harsh legislation to crack down on a problem that did not exist, leaving a lasting impact on the prison system (Tonry, 1999). Similarly, while terrorism is certainly a legitimate threat, it is possible that some counterterrorism policies are based more on public fears than on actual data: resources are focused on the forms of terrorism that are in the public eye rather than those that are actually common.

Given the importance of counterterrorism policy based on accurate data, it is vital to understand the extent to which the media's portrayal of terrorism in the USA is accurate. Unfortunately, the existing analyses are limited. While there are thorough analyses of the media frames prior to 9/11 (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006; Weimann & Brosius, 1991), post-9/11 studies have focused on coverage of specific incidents, organizations, or individuals (Nagar, 2010; Powell, 2011; Ross & Bantimaroudis, 2006). There is thus a great need for a study that explores how the media framing of terrorism in the USA has shifted in the 15 years since 9/11.

The current study aims to contribute to this body of knowledge by exploring three research questions:

1. What factors determine the level of media coverage an incident of terrorism in the USA gets?
2. How has media coverage of terrorism in the *New York Times* changed since 9/11?
3. How does the media framing of terrorism differ from reported statistics of terrorist attacks?

These questions will be explored with the using data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) that includes US terrorist incidents since 1970 (LaFree & Dugan, 2007). The database uses open source material to compile detailed information on the incidents, their victims, and when identifiable, their perpetrators. The GTD is the terrorism database that is most widely used by scholars and policy makers (LaFree, Dugan, & Miller, 2015). By cross-referencing the GTD with news archives, this study will determine which attacks receive more coverage.

We next define the concepts and theories at the core of this study and, provide an examination of the research on the media's coverage of terrorism. This is followed by an outlining of this study's methodology and findings. This study concludes with an analysis of the results and a discussion of their implications on media coverage, terrorism, and public policy.

Literature review and hypotheses

Defining terrorism

There is little consensus on a single definition of terrorism, as the label of has become strongly politicized. The scope of the term is hotly debated in international discourse, as nations are usually unwilling to agree to a definition that includes groups they support or fails to include ones they oppose. Even within the US government, different departments use varied definitions depending on their objectives and jurisdiction (Freilich, Chermak, & Simone, 2009; Schmid, Jongman, & Stohl, 1988). Since this study, as we outline below, uses GTD terrorism incidents, it relies upon the GTD's terrorism definition and inclusion criteria (LaFree et al., 2015).

The GTD's criteria state that an incident is an act of terrorism if it is an intentional act incorporating violence or the threat of violence perpetrated by sub-national entities. Beyond this core definition, the GTD uses a set of three supplemental criteria; an incident must meet at least two to be considered an act of terrorism: (1) the act serves a social, political, religious, or economic goal, not including the acquisition of profit; (2) is intended to convey a message to an audience beyond the intended victims; and/or (3) is outside the bounds of the rules of war, particularly the rules barring the targeting of civilians and other noncombatants. This definition includes some incidents that only meet a portion of these elements. For example, it would include the suicide bombing of an active US military base by an insurgent group, even though the target could not be considered noncombatant, if the attack was politically motivated and intended to send a message to the US public.

Although this study focuses primarily on incidents that occurred on US soil, the distinction between international terrorism and domestic terrorism remains important. Incidents of domestic terrorism are those which occur within the territory of the USA, while international terrorism either occurs outside the US, or transcend national boarders in terms of the methods, targets, or base of operations (18 U.S.C. § 2331). An attack within the USA can therefore be considered international terrorism if it is carried out by foreign entities or the means by which it was accomplished extend beyond our borders. For the purposes of this study, the primary concern in distinguishing between domestic and international incidents is that international incidents involve foreign entities crossing US boarders as part of the attack, while domestic incidents are carried out by individuals or groups based within the US.

Agenda setting and media framing

The underlying theoretical framework of this study is that the message the media presents has an effect on its audience. There are two theoretical models detailing this

process: agenda setting and media framing (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Weaver, 2007). Agenda setting refers to a correlation between the media's emphasis of an issue and the salience of the issue in the public eye (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Media focus serves as a guide of how much importance the audience should attach to a topic, increasing its role in political attitudes and judgments. For example, as coverage of the Gulf Crisis increased, the number of people who considered it the most important problem facing the nation also increased (Iyengar & Simon, 1993).

Media framing theory goes a step further. Not only do the media guide public awareness of issues, it also shapes the frame of reference surrounding the issues (Entman, 2010; Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Any given issue can be viewed from multiple perspectives and framed in terms of a variety of different values: mass shootings can be a gun control concern or a mental health concern; police brutality can be a racial problem or a matter of public order. Everyday decisions are made by media staff on which stories to run, which facts and values to emphasize, what sources to use for comment, and what stance to take in editorial content to shape the media frame – the narrative the news provides to link events together and highlight issues (Chong & Druckman, 2007). This process was evident during the 2008 presidential campaign, where despite claims of balance, clear biases could be seen in news coverage (Entman, 2010).

While agenda setting points to how the media opens discussion about an issue or pushes the audience toward (and away from) certain issues, media framing shapes how the audience thinks about the issues. Individuals do not necessarily adopt direct copies of the media frames: there are a number of factors that moderate the process, including strength of prior opinions and knowledge (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Often, individuals mix elements of multiple media frames (Edy & Meirick, 2007). Nonetheless, media frames have a clear influence on the audience. For example, tolerance for the KKK is higher when the news frames their rallies in terms of free speech and lower when the frame emphasizes public order instead (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997). This does not necessarily mean that the media deliberately manipulate audiences with a misleading story. Rather, there is a feedback loop between media and audience: the media simultaneously shape and respond to public opinion, presenting the narrative that is most likely to attract an audience while at the same time strengthening viewpoints even further (Entman, 2010).

Agenda setting and media framing play a key role in shaping understanding of political issues like terrorism (Matusitz, 2013). Terrorism has been described as theater due to its goal of impacting an audience beyond its immediate victims. The media coverage is its primary means of reaching that audience (Chermak, 2002; Jenkins, 1974; Weimann, 2005). Some terrorist groups have become skilled at manipulating the media to their advantage: they attract coverage with attacks on high profile targets and control the framing by providing the press with manifestos and other statements (Galily, Yarchi, Tamir, & Samuel-Azran, 2016; Nacos, 2003; Surette, Hansen, & Noble, 2009). The impact of such coverage is compounded by the fact that media narratives are most influential when the audience lacks direct experience with a topic, as is generally true of terrorism (Adoni & Mane, 1984; Chermak, 1995, 2002), and when coverage is strongly influenced by single events (Chermak, 2002).

Chermak ([2002](#)) argues, for instance, that sensational terrorism cases provide critical agenda setting and media framing opportunities. He concludes that such cases "…offer more dramatic lessons that often set new community standards. Often the most unusual and unrepresentative events can dominate media coverage for a long period of time, providing an opportunity to reshape public thinking about an issue…" (p. 15). In this way, media coverage plays a dominant role in shaping the terrorism narrative.

Biases in media frames

The media do not have the resources to report on every single crime. While muggings may be violent crimes, they are non-fatal and relatively common; they do not draw an audience in the same way that a rarer crime such as homicide does. While it is not reasonable to muggings receive coverage proportional to their frequency, eclipsing more newsworthy events, homicides themselves are not covered equally, skewed by a frame that overemphasizes news that sells and then tends to be linked to larger cultural themes (Chermak, 1995; Gruenewald, Chermak, & Pizarro, 2013). For example, homicides with white female victims are more likely to be presented and emphasized in the news, but incidents involving minority victims are ignored (Johnstone, Hawkins, & Michener, 1994; Paulsen, 2003; Sorenson, Manz, & Berk, 1998; Weiss & Chermak, 1998), despite actual crime statistics skewing in the opposite direction (Sorenson et al., 1998). This media frame shapes audience frame that views the rarest crimes as the most common; the public develops a false understanding of risk factors surrounding homicides, and a fear of crime that does not reflect actual crime rates.

The media's framing of terrorism is equally misleading. The majority of terrorist incidents receive little to no coverage: between 1980 and 10 September 2001, 15 incidents accounted for 71% of all *New York Times* articles on specific terrorist incidents, while 85% of incidents were mentioned in less than five articles (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006). The primary factors guiding media attention were the severity of the attack, the target and tactics used (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006; Weimann & Brosius, 1991), and the perpetrator's identity (Weimann & Brosius, 1991). The fact that these factors remained prominent over multiple decades suggests some consistency in media priorities, leading to this study's first hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 1: Severity of attack, tactics used, target, and perpetrator identity remain key factors in determining the level of media coverage an incident gets in the New York Times.*

Although these factors are consistent, the specific preferences within the media vary over time. In the decades prior to 9/11, the media shifted from emphasizing attacks that resulted in injuries (Weimann & Brosius, 1991) to those resulting in fatalities (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006). Stories focused on hostage-taking (Weimann & Brosius, 1991) and hijackings (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006), with attacks targeting airlines receiving high amounts of coverage as well (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006; Weimann & Brosius, 1991). A particular focus was placed on domestic terrorists, as attacks on US soil received more coverage if they originated within our borders (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006). As was the case with homicides, the media were

actually focusing on the more unusual cases: 93% of attacks had no fatalities, airlines only comprised 8.3% of targets, and 63.6% of attacks were bombings, far beyond either hijacking or hostage situations (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006). This discrepancy suggests a second hypothesis:

> Hypothesis 2: The more common an attack characteristic is, the less attention it receives in the Times, and vice versa.

Following 9/11, the media frame appears to have shifted again. In 2002, the frame was in a state of flux: while the government stance painted the Middle East as a hotbed of terrorism, media portrayals of Middle Eastern leaders were inconsistent even within a single paper (Ross & Bantimaroudis, 2006). However, limited analysis suggests that the frame has solidified since then: a study of specific incidents suggests that the media were quick to label perpetrators as Muslim and suggest a potential link to Al-Qaeda (Powell, 2011). Interestingly, the study suggested that the media tended to treat domestic attacks as isolated incidents carried out by troubled individuals, while international terrorism was a part of a war on America carried out by Jihadi extremists, in contrast to the focus on domestic terrorism prior to 9/11. These shifts in the media's framing of terrorism lead to the study's third and fourth hypotheses:

> Hypothesis 3: The specific tactics, targets, and perpetrators that receive the most coverage have changed since 9/11.

> Hypothesis 4: Incidents receive more coverage if their perpetrators can be tied to international organizations, particularly Jihadi extremists.

To test these hypotheses, this study will conduct a content analysis of *New York Times* coverage of terrorist attacks on US soil since 9/11. The *New York Times* was selected for several reasons. First, this paper represents a significant extension of the Chermak & Gruenewald piece that was published in 2006. Although Chermak & Gruenewald's piece that relied only on the *New York Times* demonstrated a number of important factors that facilitate coverage and high profile coverage of such events, their concluding call, in the discussion section, for a follow-up study is important. It is significant that many observers expected terrorism coverage to have changed dramatically following the September 11th attacks. In fact, scholars have noted the impact of this event on media coverage (Chermak, Bailey, & Brown, 2003; Nacos, 2002, 2003). Importantly though as of today no studies have attempted to study media coverage of terrorism events post-9/11.

Second, existing scholarship highlights that the *New York Times* is the leading source of news. Scholars argue that the NYT currently is and has been the most influential source of media coverage for a long time, and "well worth scholarly attention" (Benoit, Stein, & Hansen, 2005, p. 361; see also, Chernomas & Hudson, 2015; Lule, 2002; Malinkina & McLeod, 2000; Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013; Vecsey, 2011, 2013). It has been called the "flagship" of serious journalism in the USA (Bowden, 2009) and the "national paper of record" (Benoit et al., 2005). Lule (2001, p. 6) argues that "cases might be drawn from various media, such as the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, the weekly news magazines, CNN, the evening news .... But more than any other news

medium, the New York Times has become crucial reading for those interested in the news, national politics, and international affairs".[1]

Third, many scholars have focused solely on the coverage of various social and political issues in the *New York Times* because, as noted, its coverage is regarded as a reliable indicator of issue salience and as representative of national coverage at large (Schildkraut, Elsass, & Meredith, 2017; Winter & Eyal, 1981).[2]

Data and methods

The purpose of this content analysis is to examine the factors that influence the level of coverage a post-9/11 terrorist attack gets in the *New York Times*. The study's chief concerns are whether an incident received any coverage in the *New York Times* at all and, if it was covered, the number of articles covering the attack. This study will use a mix of regression techniques to determine what factors are associated with the level of coverage.

Sample

This study was designed using terrorist incidents taken from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and articles from the *New York Times*' digital archive. The GTD's inclusion criteria are as previously stated, with the addition that incidents require independent verification from at least two sources for inclusion in the database.

Incidents were obtained from the GTD using a criterion sampling method: all incidents that occurred within US borders between 12 September 2001 and 31 December 2015 were included in the study. At the time of analysis, incidents from 2016 had not

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[1]Unlike many other news organizations, the *Times* has both a national and international audience (Blakely, 2003; Lule, 2002), and its reporters have won far more journalism awards than any other news organization (Chernomas & Hudson, 2015, p. 1; see also Lule, 2001; Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013). According to Lule (2001, p. 6), "Understanding the Times has become a necessary part of understanding the times. Though not the biggest, it may well be the most significant newspaper in the world, "the last great newspaper." Evidence of the *Times*' influence is clear. Botelho (2011, p. 266) similarly argues that "the newspaper's recognition as a socially attributed cultural national authority, and its format as the newspaper in the United States with the largest readership, combine to place it in an important political position." *Research confirms that reporting in the Times impacts policymakers, the public, and other community leaders* (Lule, 2002; McCombs, 2013; Botelho, 2011). The Times is a key gatekeeper to national news coverage, and most other newspapers and television news directors follow what it emphasizes (Benoit et al., 2005; Blakely, 2003; Lule, 2002). In this way, the NYT "sets the agenda for other news media" (Lule, 2001, p. 6, 2002; Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013). For example, Golan 2006) found that what is published in the morning edition of the NYT significantly determines what is broadcasted on television news. Similarly, Denham (2014) finds that the salience of policy issues will be transferred to other news outlets and will be covered similarly when first emphasized in the NYT. Importantly, it also significantly impacts the public (Botelho, 2011; Landriscina, 2012; Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002; McCombs, 2013). For example, a 2002 study by Althaus and Tewksbury found that people exposed to just five days of *Times* coverage adjusted their agendas in a way that was consistent with the news organization's agenda. We thank our peer reviewers for reminding us of the limitations of using a single paper. Although still considered a leading newspaper, the media industry has changed so dramatically, which leaves gaps in our understanding. This paper provides an understanding of how the Times coverage terrorism 9/11, but we acknowledge the important need for expanding research to look at additional online, and offline sources.

[2]The following is a list of topics published since 2000 that use only the NYT as the data source: school violence coverage (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Muschert & Carr, 2006; Schildkraut et al., 2017); mass shooting coverage (Schildkraut et al., 2017); Islam (Acim, 2014); Jews and Judaism (Vecsey, 2013); Native Americans (Hays, 2007); LGBQT issues (Burgess, 2011); religion (Vecsey, 2011); Paralympics (Tynedal & Wolbring, 2013); influenza pandemics (Blakely, 2003); Housing Markets (Landriscina, 2012); scandal (Schwartz & Hirschhorn, 2009); Presidential Campaigns (Benoit, Stein & Hansen, 2005; Meeks, 2013); the presidency (Bose, 2009); Brazilian popular culture (Botelho, 2011); foreign and US disasters (Lule, 2002; Hume, 2003; Van Belle, 2000); business (Koehn, 2009) and the economy (Chernomas & Hudson, 2015); Afghanistan (Malinkina, & McLeod, 2000); Chechnya (Malinkina, & McLeod, 2000).

Table 1. Characteristics of terrorist incidents in sample ($N = 222$).

Variable (coding)	N	Percent of all incidents
Outcome		
Successful (0)[a]	184	83.3
Unsuccessful (1)	37	16.7
Region		
West (0)[b]	102	46.2
South (1)	52	23.5
Midwest (2)	38	17.2
Northeast (3)	26	11.8
Multiple (4)	3	1.4
Seriousness – deaths		
No Deaths (0)[a]	194	87.8
Deaths (1)	27	12.2
Seriousness – injuries		
No Injuries (0)[a]	190	86
Injuries (1)	31	14
Origin		
Domestic (0)[a]	213	96.4
International (1)	8	3.6
Apparent motive		
Far left (0)[a]	86	38.9
Far right (1)	82	37.1
Jihadi (2)	21	9.5
Other (3)	5	2.3
Unknown (4)	27	12.2
Target		
Business (0)[a]	53	24
Private citizens & property (1)	40	18
Religious figures/institutions (2)	29	13.1
Government (3)	24	10.9
Abortion related (4)	22	10
Military (6)	7	3.2
Police (7)	7	3.2
Multiple/other (8)	38	17.1
Unknown (9)[b]	1	0.5
Tactic		
Facility/infrastructure attack (0)[a]	118	53.4
Bombing/explosion (1)	49	22.2
Armed assault (2)	39	17.6
Unarmed assault (3)	12	5.4
Other (4)	3	1.4
Weapon		
Incendiary (0)[a]	120	54.3
Explosive (1)	41	18.6
Firearms (2)	35	15.8
Other (3)	25	11.3

[a]Reference category.
[b]Not included in analysis.

yet been added to the database. This sampling method initially produced 280 incidents. However, linked attacks were merged into a single incident. Incidents were considered to be linked if they were closely related enough that coverage of them could not be separated. Two hundred and twenty-one incidents were left after merging. For example, the various anthrax letters sent in by Bruce Ivins in late 2001 were treated as a single incident, as were the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing and subsequent murder of an MIT policeman by the perpetrators.

These incidents were coded along seven different categorical independent variables. The categories of each variable are listed in Table 1 along with the number of incidents in each category.

For each variable, the largest category was used as a reference category. Outcome of incident was treated as a binary variable: an attack was considered successful if its immediate goals were met, regardless of its lasting effects. For instance, a bombing was successful as long as the bomb was set off, regardless of whether anyone was caught in the blast. The region of the incidents was coded based on census designations. Seriousness of an incident was measured by victim fatalities and injuries, both of which were treated as binary variables. Origin of incident was coded as a binary variable, where incidents in which perpetrators crossed US borders to commit the incident were as international and incidents carried out by individuals radicalized within the US were considered to be domestic. Incidents with unknown perpetrators were considered to be domestic, due to the unlikelihood of groups or individuals crossing US borders to commit an attack without either getting caught or deliberately calling attention to themselves.

As many incidents were carried out by unaffiliated individuals, perpetrator identity was measured by the ideological motive of the attack: Far Left, Far Right, Jihadi, Other, and Unknown.[3] Target and Weapon were coded based on GTD classifications. Tactical classification were defined as follows: facility/infrastructure attacks include attacks primarily intended to cause damage to non-human targets; bombings attempt to harm people directly with the use of explosives; armed assaults target people with use firearms, incendiary devices, or sharp implements, and unarmed assaults include incidents intended to harm people with any other weapon, including chemical, biological, or radiological weapons. Hijackings and hostage situations, both relatively common prior to 9/11 (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006), are almost nonexistent in the dataset, and are classified as other tactics.

Procedure

For each incident, a search was conducted of the *New York Times*' digital archive, accessed *via* an existing subscription. The search process was conducted according to procedures outlined by Chermak & Gruenewald (2006): it began by searching for articles within seven days of the incident using a relevant keyword such as "bomb" or "shooting". Using the resulting articles as a starting point, the entire archive was then searched using the names of individuals, groups, and targets involved in the attack. Additional search criteria was gleaned from articles as necessary.

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[3]This variable was not part of the original GTD dataset, and was coded based on the following criteria and guided by the ideological definitional work published by Freilich et al. (2014). Far Left attacks primarily consist of those with environmental and animal rights motives, but also include attacks motivated by other issues falling under the umbrella of the political left. Far Right attacks are those carried out by white supremacists, Neo-Nazis, anti-abortion activists, Sovereign Citizens, and those with similar motives. Jihadi attacks are those motivated by the ideals of Islamic extremism, anti-Israeli sentiment, or related issues, In addition to explicit statements of intent, classification of motive took into account implicit indicators of intent including target of attack and signifiers of ideology, such as swastikas, left behind at scene.

Table 2. Fifteen most news producing terrorist incidents.

Incident (perpetrator)	Year	Articles	Words
Anthrax Letters (Bruce Ivins)	2001	197	205,296
Boston Marathon Bombing (Dzokhar & Tamarlan Tsarnaev)	2013	169	151,173
Fort Hood Shooting (Nidal Hasan)	2009	94	85,079
Charleston Church Shooting (Dylann Roof)	2015	47	52,664
San Bernardino Shooting (Syed Farook & Tashfeen Malik)	2015	48	52,099
Underwear Bombing (Umar Abdulmutallab)	2009	42	38,809
NYC Police Shooting (Ismaaiyl Brinsley)	2014	17	20,255
Chattanooga Shootings (Muhammad Abdulazeez)	2015	16	19,338
Shooting of George Tiller (Scott Roeder)	2009	24	19,315
Planned Parenthood Shooting (Robert Dear)	2015	11	15,238
Sikh Temple Shooting (Wade Page)	2012	9	11,387
Riverside Police Shooting (Christopher Dorner)	2013	14	11,136
Curtis Cullwell Center Shooting (Elton Simpson & Nadir Soofi)	2015	11	11,045
Texas Fertilizer Plant Fire (Unknown)	2013	10	10,709
Chapel Hill Shooting (Craig Hicks)	2015	10	9400

Using this search process, a measure of the total number of articles on each incident and their total word count was obtained. These measures served as the dependent variables for this study and included all articles that were focused on relaying specific details of the incident through all stages of the justice process. It did not include articles on other topics, such as policy or legislation that referenced the incident. For example, it did not include coverage of the gun control debates that followed the Charleston shooting or the legal battle between Apple and the FBI regarding Syed Rizwan Farook's iPhone.

Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using both R and the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics for Linux, Version 23.0. Armonk, New York) as appropriate. Following an initial descriptive analysis of the distribution of coverage, regression models were employed to determine which independent variables are predictors of both presence of coverage and amount of coverage. In addition, content of the coverage of the 10 most covered articles was considered to gain a richer, more contextualized understanding of the way in which these events were framed, focusing on the specific elements that were prioritized in the coverage of the incidents and how the perpetrators and victims were presented.

Findings

Distribution of coverage

The *New York Times* included over 906 articles and more than 842,498 words on terrorist incidents. However, these articles only cover 63 (28.4%) of the incidents, a considerably smaller proportion than the 55.3% of incidents covered in the decades prior to 9/11 (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006). 85% of incidents received less than five articles, and less than 1500 words were written about 80% of incidents. Table 2 shows the 15 most news producing incidents by word count in the sample. These cases accounted for 79.5% of articles and 85% of words written on all incidents.

Table 3. Mean number of articles and words by incident characteristic.

Variable	Percent of incidents covered	Mean no. of articles	Mean no. of words
Outcome			
Successful[a]	30.1	4.53	4262.04
Unsuccessful	21.6	2.03	1542.92
Region			
West[a]	14.9	1.13	1054.91
South	51.9	5.25	4625.21
Midwest	18.4	2.47	2295.68
Northeast	42.3	8.42	7473.88
Multiple	100	67.67	69,476
Seriousness – deaths			
No deaths[a]	19	0.88	634.9
Deaths	96.3	27.19	26463.19
Seriousness – injuries			
No injuries[a]	20.6	1.14	934.37
Injuries	77.4	22.23	21304.74
Origin			
Domestic[a]	27.8	1.31	3688.12
International	50	8.25	6895
Apparent motive			
Far left[a]	5.8	0.49	449.05
Far right	40.7	2.53	2257.89
Jihadi	66.7	20.29	18,335.14
Other	20	1.4	925.8
Unknown	37	8.29	8421.03
Target			
Business[a]	13.2	0.71	550
Private citizens & property	22.5	5.33	4667.53
Religious figures/institutions	34.4	2.66	2777.93
Government	58.3	4	3527.83
Abortion related	22.7	1.77	1626.5
Military	42.9	17	15655.71
Police	71.4	6.71	6162.43
Multiple/other	45.5	12.5	12156.95
Tactic			
Facility/infrastructure attack[a]	10.2	0.34	249.39
Bombing/explosion	22.5	5.76	5244.24
Armed assault	82.1	9.12	8403.89
Unarmed assault	0.5	18.17	18,121
Other	66.7	2.67	1814
Weapon			
Incendiary[a]	10	0.26	204.79
Explosive	26.8	6.78	6241.24
Firearms	73.5	10.31	9376.57
Other	41.7	9.75	9516.5

[a]Reference category.

Table 3 shows distribution of news coverage by incident characteristics. Many of these results are consistent with pre-9/11 research (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006; Weimann & Brosius, 1991) as well as the hypotheses of this study.

Despite being in the minority, attacks that result in deaths or injuries were not only more likely to be covered, but also received increased attention when they were covered. This trend holds for other variables as well: far left attacks, facility/infrastructure attacks, and attacks on businesses are all some of the least covered incidents compared to other levels of the same variables. When looking at which incidents receive the most attention, however, a shift from pre-9/11 priorities can be seen. Incidents

Table 4. Mean number of articles and words by year.

Year	No. of incidents	Percent of incidents covered	No. of articles	No. of words	No of incidents	Percent of incidents covered	No. of articles	No. of words
					Increase (+) or decrease (−) or stay the same (∼) from previous year?			
2002	16	25	1.75	1320.38	−	−	−	−
2003	31	9.7	0.38	217.7	+	−	−	−
2004	8	0	0	0	−	−	−	−
2005	20	10	.2	78.1	+	+	+	+
2006	6	33.3	2	848.5	−	+	+	+
2007	9	22.2	0.22	191.11	+	−	−	−
2008	18	11.1	0.28	125.5	+	−	+	−
2009	10	60	17	15394.4	−	+	+	+
2010	13	30.8	1.31	916.38	+	−	−	−
2011	9	44.4	1.67	1046.78	−	+	+	+
2012	14	28.6	1.57	1651.29	+	−	−	+
2013	14	35.7	14.36	12691.21	∼	+	+	+
2014	19	36.8	2.16	2096.26	+	+	−	−
2015	31	51.6	5.45	5771.74	+	+	+	+

with governmental targets are likely to receive at least some coverage, but receive fewer articles on average than other incidents. With regards to tactics, armed assaults received considerable amounts of attention. This is not surprising since the majority of the top news producing incidents are shootings. Unarmed assaults received high amounts of coverage on average, although the inclusion of the anthrax letters under this category likely inflates this statistic to some degree.

Table 4 displays changes in both number of incidents and amount of coverage from year to year, beginning with 2002, the first full year in the sample.

Much like pre-9/11 coverage (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006), there is considerable variation in the level of attention incidents receive over time. Terrorism enters the media spotlight suddenly, and leaves just as quickly. For instance, note the changes from 2008 to 2010: percentage of coverage rises from 11% to 60% before falling back to 30%, with similarly drastic changes in amount of coverage. As was the case in pre-9/11 coverage, these shifts do not line up with changes in the number of incidents per year. In fact, number of incidents and levels of coverage move in opposite directions in many years.

Multivariate analyses

To examine which factors influence whether the news media cover a given incident, two logistic regression models were estimated. The logistic coefficient, standard error, significance level, and odds ratios are presented in Table 5.

The Outcome, Region, Seriousness, Origin, Target, and Motive variables are included in both models, while Tactic and Motive are presented independently. This is due to concerns of multicollinearity: the Armed Assault (Tactic) and Firearms (Weapon) variables are strongly correlated ($r = 0.840$, $p > .01$). Both models also analyze coverage over time, using three-year clusters to avoid issues of standard error. An examination

Table 5. Logistic regression analysis of coverage of terrorist incidents by characteristic.

Variable	Logistic coefficient (B)		Standard error		Odds ratio	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Outcome						
Successful[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Unsuccessful	−1.239	−1.229	0.792	0.752	0.290	0.292
Region						
West[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
South	1.338*	1.319	0.667	0.658	3.813	3.738
Midwest	0.669	0.234	0.831	0.842	1.952	1.264
Northeast	1.245	1.221	0.734	0.721	3.472	3.391
Year						
2001–2003	–	–	–	–	–	–
2004–2006	−1.826	−1.564	1.104	1.004	0.161	0.209
2007–2009	−1.325	−1.094	1.100	1.052	0.266	0.335
2010–2012	−0.766	−0.704	0.938	0.915	0.465	0.494
2013–2015	−1.406	−1.272	0.991	0.960	0.245	0.280
Seriousness – deaths						
No deaths[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Deaths	3.261*	2.682*	1.272	1.305	26.081	14.609
Seriousness – injuries						
No injuries[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Injuries	1.781*	1.914*	0.86	0.842	5.936	6.782
Origin						
Domestic[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
International	0.429	0.350	1.682	1.684	1.536	1.419
Apparent motive						
Far left[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Far right	2.413*	1.933*	1.008	0.953	11.162	7.340
Jihadi	2.610*	2.178	1.249	1.191	13.601	8.824
Other	−0.208	−0.532	2.596	2702	0.812	0.558
Unknown	3.029*	1.060*	1.154	1.060	20.673	10.455
Target						
Business[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Private citizens & property	−0.777	−0.745	1.267	1.115	0.460	0.475
Religious figures/institutions	0.493	0.258	1.050	1.015	1.637	1.294
Government	2.307*	2.131*	1.036	0.941	10.042	8.426
Abortion related	0.605	0.477	1.125	1.107	1.831	1.611
Military	−2.018	−2.375	0.575	2.360	0.133	0.093
Police	0.805	0.898	1.466	1.450	2.236	2.454
Other	0.272	0.009	1.000	0.967	1.312	1.009
Tactic						
Facility/infrastructure attack[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bombing/explosion	0.611	–	0.773	–	1.842	–
Armed assault	2.013*	–	0.847	–	7.486	–
Unarmed assault	1.849	–	1.229	–	6.350	–
Other	4.302	–	1.807	–	73.854	–
Weapon						
Incendiary[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Explosive	–	0.875	–	0.257	–	2.399
Firearms	–	2.317**	–	0.877	–	10.141
Other	–	1.063	–	0.894	–	2.896
Constant	−4.297***	−3.776***	1.055	0.922	0.014	0.023

Note. Model 1: $\chi^2 = 139.024$***; Cox and Snell 0.473. Model 2: $\chi^2 = 134.597$***; Cox and Snell 0.462.
[a]Reference category.
*$p \leq .05$.
**$p \leq .01$.
***$p \leq .001$.

Table 6. Robust regression analysis of coverage of terrorist incidents by characteristic.

Variable	Number of articles		Word count		Words/article	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Outcome						
Successful[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Unsuccessful	−0.073	−0.045	−48.261	−60.371	−12.988	−11.245
Region						
West[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
South	0.330***	0.144***	157.522***	158.920***	51.094***	47.408***
Midwest	0.122	0.040	84.590*	66.137	18.622	12.208
Northeast	0.167	0.050	52.273	55.971	15.650	11.863
Year						
2001–2003	–	–	–	–	–	–
2004–2006	−0.059	−0.024	−29.391	−31.586	−16.952	−17.307
2007–2009	−0.027	−0.007	−21.280	−16.990	−20.480	−17.255
2010–2012	0.021	0.031	43.029	54.999	13.775	11.002
2013–2015	0.047	0.003	20.003	15.703	8.848	6.531
Seriousness – deaths						
No deaths[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Deaths	8.572***	7.668***	7,105.109***	6,943.226***	648.303***	630.844***
Seriousness – injuries						
No injuries[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Injuries	0.672***	1.033***	367.566***	363.596***	100.814***	94.016***
Origin						
Domestic[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
International	−0.488*	−0.650***	−722.982***	−749.139***	−53.056***	−68.645*
Apparent motive						
Far left[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Far right	−0.141	−0.066	−141.792*	−112.953***	−15.129	−3.265
Jihadi	0.573**	0.793***	689.284***	724.035***	52.304*	81.436***
Other	0.183	0.439**	526.273**	514.225**	3.433	10.807
Unknown	0.123	0.049	86.516	65.886	31.086	28.279
Target						
Business[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Private citizens & property	0.005	−0.0097	−7.248	−8.820	4.927	3.438
Religious figures/institutions	0.009	−0.009	57.875	26.423	4.004	−6.129
Abortion related	0.156	0.064	138.193*	106.923	12.956	0.039
Government	0.431***	0.779***	263.326***	355.944***	240.969***	251.833***
Military	−0.081	−0.031	−107.774	−101.274	−48.238	−53.424*
Police	0.019	0.211	172.644	242.424	−14.342	−17.286
Other	−0.045	−0.003	−23.225	−3.245	−2.234	−0.714
Tactic						
Facility/infrastructure attack[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bombing/explosion	0.043	–	19.521	–	3.780	–
Armed assault	0.460***	–	291.271***	–	221.229***	–
Unarmed assault	0.260	–	−36.695	–	9.699	–
Other	0.748*	–	657.838***	–	564.355***	–
Weapon						
Incendiary[a]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Explosive	–	−0.006	–	−2.575	–	−2.964
Firearms	–	1.058***	–	348.770***	–	229.709***
Other	–	−0.047	–	−42.097	–	4.527
Constant	−0.055	−0.008	−24.937	−12.814	−6.052	−2.003

[a]Reference category.
*$p \leq .05$.
**$p \leq .01$.
***$p \leq .001$.

of chi-square statistics shows that both models are significant ($p < .001$). Model 1 explained 47.3% of the variance in coverage status, while Model 2 explained 46.2%.

Both models produced similar results. As in pre-9/11 analyses (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006; Weimann & Brosius, 1991), incidents were significantly more likely to receive coverage if they resulted in fatalities or injuries. Incidents with governmental targets were significantly more likely to be covered than incidents targeting businesses. Armed assaults were significantly more likely to receive coverage than facility and infrastructure attacks, and incidents using firearms were significantly more likely to receive coverage than incidents using incendiary devices. Incidents with far right, or unknown motivations were more likely to receive coverage than far left incidents, as were Jihadi incidents in Model 1. Of these three categories, attacks with unknown motives have the highest odds ratio, followed by Jihadi incidents. The only significant result by region is found in coverage of Southern incidents in Model 1, and there are no significant results by year.

The nature of the dataset poses some problems when it comes to exploring the factors that impact the number of articles and word count of an incident. While ordinary least squares regression would normally be an appropriate statistical technique for handling continuous dependent variables, the results are highly sensitive to outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In this regard, there are a number of problematic cases in this sample. Excluding them from analysis would allow for the use of OLS, but these cases are critical for understanding how the news covers terrorism. Instead, this study employed robust regression as an alternative to OLS, due to its ability to account for outliers by weighting cases based on their residuals (Holland & Welsch, 1977).

Robust regression was conducted for both sets of independent variables (outcome, region, year, seriousness, origin, motive, target, tactic; outcome, region, year, seriousness, origin, motive, target, weapon) for each of three measures of news salience: number of articles, word count, and words per article. The results of these six equations are present in Table 6.

The results are largely consistent across models and are similar to the findings of the logistic regression presented previously. Incidents occurring in the South showed increased of coverage compared to incidents occurring in the West, possibly a result of the fact that Washington, DC is located in this region. It is likely that threats to the country's political center are driving the importance of this variable. Both measures of seriousness were associated with increased media attention in all models, although deaths had a stronger impact on coverage than injuries. On average, over 7000 more words and eight more articles were written on incidents involving at least one death. Incidents of international origin received less attention than domestic incidents. Jihadi incidents showed increased coverage compared to far left incidents, while coverage far right incidents has a lower wordcount than coverage of far left incidents, without significant results in other measures. Incidents with governmental targets received increased coverage compared to incidents targeting businesses. Armed assaults received more news space than facility/infrastructure attacks, as do incidents with other tactics. As the attacks classified as using other tactics are hijackings and hostage situations, it is tempting to interpret this finding as evidence that these attacks receive the same level of coverage as they did prior to 9/11, but caution is advised given the small size of this category. Finally, incidents involving firearms received more coverage than those involving incendiary devices in all models.

How are the incidents framed?

Although these analyses tell us which incidents are likely to be the most salient, they tell us little about how the attacks are framed. To supplement these findings, we examined the content of the coverage of the incidents in Table 2.

Despite being one of the strongest predictors of coverage, slain victims were given minimal attention, with more focus on memorial services (e.g. Nir, 2014; Southall, 2015) than on the victims themselves, although noteworthy victims such as abortion provider Dr. George Tiller received additional focus (Barstow, 2009; Stumpe & Davey, 2009). Survivors received even less attention: unless they testified in court, they were generally out of focus. While there was some articles on the injuries sustained by survivors of the Boston Marathon bombing (Kolata, Longman, & Pilon, 2013; Louis, 2013), such coverage was the exception rather than the norm. Overall, articles on the perpetrators were given far more attention than victims, particularly for the most news producing incidents.

Perpetrator coverage was a major factor in differentiating the presentation of terrorism incidents. In incidents of Jihadi terrorism, coverage focused on the radicalization process, attempting to track the perpetrators exposure to a foreign ideology. Foreign excursions of Tamarlan Tsarnaev and Mohammod Abdulazeez were analyzed to determine if they became radicalized overseas (Fahim, 2015; Schmidt, Michael, & Barry, 2013), the Curtis Cullwell Center shooters were linked to ISIS *via* twitter (Callimachi, 2015), and both Nidal Hasan and Umar Abulmutallab were reported as having contact with the extremist Al Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula cleric Anwar al-Awlaki (Erlanger, 2010). Clear origins for radical ideologies were not always found: the radicalization of the San Bernardino shooters was not tied to any specific source, but the *Times* reported on signs that they had held their extreme ideology for quite some time prior to the attacks (Masood, Schmidt, & Nagourney, 2015; Turkewitz, 2015), with particular focus given to Tashfeen Malik's activities prior to entering the US (Hubbard, 2015; Masood & Walsh, 2015; Walsh, 2015). Overall, coverage of Jihadi incidents focused on possible external sources of radicalization rather than the personal histories of the perpetrators.

While some attention was given to the personal troubles of Jihadi terrorists, they were presented as the motivation to explore Jihadi propaganda, not as the cause of the attack itself. Mohammod Abdulazeez in particular was reported as being mentally ill, but his trip to Jordan still factored prominently into the narrative, with stark changes noted in his behavior after his return (Fernandez, Blinder, Schmitt, & Pérez-Peña, 2015).

In contrast, coverage of other perpetrators focused primarily on personal factors, with few attempts to tie ideological motivations to an external source. Although Dylann Roof was presented as a white supremacist (Robles, Horowitz, & Dewan, 2015), his beliefs were not explained by linking him to a larger movement. Instead, he was a troubled boy from a broken home (Robles & Stewart, 2015) who produced a "rambling" (Sack & Blinder, 2017) manifesto. Similarly, Robert Lewis Dear was "an angry and occasionally violent man who seemed deeply disturbed" (Fausset, 2015), and Craig Hicks was "the angry man on Summerwalk Circle … irritated about noise, irascible about parking, hostile to religion" (Katz & Paulson, 2015). Even when these perpetrators do have extremist ties, coverage focuses on their personal histories. Scott Roeder's involvement with anti-abortion groups and militias are presented not as the explanation for his actions but as part of a personal history that includes divorce, possible mental illness, and prior criminal

convictions (Saulny & Davey, 2009). Wade Page was heavily involved in the white supremacist subculture (Dao & Kovaleski, 2012), but the shooting itself was presented as the culmination of a downward spiral after his girlfriend broke up with him two weeks before and he stopped showing up for work (Eligon, 2012).

Notably, coverage of the anthrax letters does not fit the same pattern as coverage of other incidents, as it is presented as a public health issue as much as it is an act of terrorism. The *Times* tracked the spread of anthrax as it might track an infectious disease, reporting on closures of post offices and other facilities for testing and decontamination (e.g. Canedy & Firestone, 2001; Hanley, 2002). As the pool of victims expanded to include civilians, their private lives were analyzed to determine where they might have been exposed to the spores (Revkin, 2001; Zielbauer, 2001). The widespread contamination of the postal system created a level of fear and uncertainty unlike other incidents in the sample, and the extreme amounts of coverage the anthrax attacks received may be a result of factors unique to the incident.

Discussion

This study set out to explore the post-9/11 media framing of terrorism *in* the *New York Times*, contrasted with both pre-9/11 coverage and with reported statistics of attacks. Four hypotheses were proposed: that the overall factors shaping post-9/11 coverage are the same as those shaping pre-9/11 coverage; that within factors, the media prioritize rarer types of incidents over more common ones; that the specific media priorities within factors have shifted since 9/11; and that the media prioritize incidents with ties to international, Jihadi extremists.

The findings of this study support these hypotheses. Seriousness, target, tactic, and perpetrator identity, the primary factors shaping pre-9/11 *New York Times* coverage, were found to be just as influential in shaping post-9/11 coverage. Like pre-9/11 coverage, many factors follow a pattern in which less frequent types of incidents receive increased media attention. Attacks with deaths or injuries receive increased coverage *in the Times* despite being in the minority. Facility/infrastructure attacks and bombings receive less coverage than armed and unarmed assaults despite being more common. Far left and far right attacks receive less coverage than Jihadi attacks, and are less likely to be covered than even incidents with unknown motives.

Beyond these findings, there have been notable shifts from pre-9/11 coverage. Some types of attacks that were previously covered in the *Times* still receive attention: armed assaults with firearms and domestic attacks remain prominent. However, the changing nature of terrorism has necessitated shifts in coverage. Due to changes in airport security, the threat of attacks targeting airports have been greatly reduced, and attention has shifted to more vulnerable government targets. Bombings no longer draw significant attention compared to other types of attacks, and while hijackings may draw some of the same attention they did previously, they are too infrequent to be sure. Additionally, the *Times* no longer shows a bias towards incidents in the Northeast. It is possible that an increased online presence has encouraged the *Times* to cater to a broader audience.

More striking than any differences within factors is changes in the overall pattern of coverage. Compared to Chermak and Gruenewald's (2006) analysis, the top 15 incidents

account for an increased percentage of *the Times'* coverage, while a far greater portion of incidents receive no coverage at all. As a result, the most sensationalized incidents have an even greater impact on the media frame than they did prior to 9/11.

As hypothesized, Jihadi incidents are disproportionately represented in the *Times'* coverage. Most incidents, even those with unknown motives, are more likely to be covered at all compared far left incidents, which largely consist of environmental and animal rights related attacks. However, Jihadi incidents consistently receive increased amounts of coverage across all measures. Although this does not translate to increased coverage of international incidents, coverage of the top 10 incidents suggests that there is an attempt to treat Jihadi extremists as international regardless of their actual origin, as suggested by prior analyses (Powell, 2011). While coverage of other forms of terrorism focuses on personal causes, assuming it discusses motive at all, coverage of Jihadi incidents focuses extensively on external sources of radicalization. Not only does this link the perpetrators to foreign extremists, it arguably shifts the blame away from the perpetrator to the ideology. To some extent, this is understandable, given that Jihadi ideology has a foreign origin, but by presenting domestic terrorists as foreign, such coverage misleads the public.

Overall, the *New York Times'* post-9/11 media framing of terrorism is not a dramatic shift from its pre-9/11 media frame. Rather, it is a stronger presentation of the same frame. The *Times* continues to give the most prominence to incidents that are not representative of patterns of terrorism within the United States, while ignoring typical cases of terrorism entirely. Despite perceptions of a liberal bias within the *Times*, it presents a form of terrorism that is bloody, personal, and Jihadi. It creates an idea of terrorism that includes mass shootings in broad daylight, but not arson in the middle of the night. It ties homegrown extremists to foreign sources of radicalization. Such coverage creates an impression that the threat is only external, obscuring domestic sources of radicalization.

Whether such coverage results from an intentional effort to garner support for certain policies or simply a desire to increase revenue, its impact is clearly visible. Coverage in the wake of 9/11 was instrumental in garnering support for wars in Asia and the Middle East: the attack was framed as an act of war rather than a crime, and so its perpetrators should be killed in battle rather than brought to trial (Edy & Meirick, 2007). More generally, such coverage results in a moral panic: sensationalist coverage of jihadi extremism inspires a fear beyond what the attacks often justify (Altheide, 2006, 2009). While the most cynical view would be that such coverage is a political tool to garner support for policies that would otherwise be objectionable, it could just as easily be a result of a desire to build and maintain an audience by focusing on what is already considered newsworthy (Altheide, 2006, 2007). However, the results are the same regardless of the intent.

The findings of this study are important contributions to the body of research on the presentation of terrorism in the news, but there are a number of significant limitations that still need to be addressed in future research. The fact that the GTD includes the *New York Times* as one of its sources has the potential to introduce problems of endogeneity, but the impact on the model is likely to be minimal, as the GTD draws from many other sources besides the *Times*, including other news sources, wire services, and media aggregators (LaFree et al., 2015). More important is the problem of generalizability. Although the *New York Times* is most often used to determine media salience, it is still unclear how these findings reflect coverage from other media outlets. Pre-9/11 analyses indicate that the primary factors

influencing terrorism coverage in the *Times* also influenced coverage in from other sources (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006; Weimann & Brosius, 1991), suggesting that other sources may still rely on those same factors now. There is some evidence that the overemphasis of Jihadi attacks extends to other sources (Powell, 2011), but other factors may be treated differently by other media outlets. In particular, other sources may treat far right and far left attacks differently depending on their political preferences. As a result, it is important to examine other newspapers (e.g. *New York Post*, *Washington Post*; *Washington Times*), while also expanding the discussion to other media outlets (e.g. television coverage).

There are a number of other questions that future studies can address as well. The GTD is an important source of data on terrorism incidents, but like all databases, its inclusion/exclusion criteria ultimately impacts what events get counted. Are there other events defined in the media (or a specific media source like the *New York Times*) as a terrorism incident that is not considered in that way by the data source? How are media defined terrorism events similar and different than database events? Moreover, there are several other important terrorism databases, such as the American Terrorism Study (ATS) and the US Extremist Crime Database (ECDB). Although there are some similarities between what events get included in each database, there certainly are differences and it would be intriguing to know what percentage of events get covered from each source and what are the characteristics of events of the events not covered by the media. Another key question to explore much further is the actual coverage of the stories about terrorism published. Content and narrative analysis are critical tools for better understanding how issues get presented in the news. Understanding this presentation can ultimately let us better know how the public thinks about terrorism and terrorists. Studies addressing these questions will provide further understanding of both the content and impact of the media's framing of terrorism.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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